



District 2

Jon Geenen
District Director

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Testimony of Jay McMurran on behalf of Jon T. Geenen, Director, USW District 2

Good morning. I want to thank Chairman Accavitti and the other members of the House energy and Technology Committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of a 20% Renewal Portfolio Standard by the year 2020.

First of all, let me begin by stating that my name is Jay McMurran and I am the Political Education and Legislative Coordinator for the United Steelworkers, District 2, which represents approximately 80,000 active and retired Steelworkers in the states of Michigan and Wisconsin. The Steelworkers support the 20% standard because we believe it offers our state an opportunity to take advantage of the need for developing and implementing renewable and alternative forms of energy.

As we meet here in Lansing today, world leaders, scientists, elected representatives of numerous national, state, provincial and local governments, as well as concerned citizens from all walks of life are gathering in Bali, to discuss the urgent need to address global warming.

Here at home the price of gas is hovering at \$3.00 per gallon and working families are bracing to be hit with the first home heating bills of the new Michigan winter. The rising costs of fuel for homes and autos are squeezing the spending power of Michigan families and threaten to do further harm to our State's already troubled economy.

It is these two factors, the concern over global warming and the ever increasing price of fuel that will spurn the growth of new technologies in renewable and alternative forms of energy. The states, communities and corporations that act quickly to encourage the development of those technologies will be in the best positions to capitalize on new sources of revenue and the potential to develop good paying, family supportive jobs of the future.

The Steelworkers Union has already been involved in such an opportunity. In Pennsylvania, an abandoned steel mill was renovated and turned into state of the art facility, producing turbines to be used in the wind generated energy field. Thanks to the foresight of Pennsylvanian leaders, some 600 Steelworkers are back to work with the potential of adding another 400 jobs within the next five years.

In North Dakota, L.M. Glasfiber began manufacturing blades for use on energy generating wind mills in 1999 with just 60 employees. Today that number has swelled to over 700 and the company is looking into expanding into states that show a commitment to renewal energy.

There are other examples of far thinking states like Minnesota that have developed strong Renewal Portfolio Standards and are now in the infancy stage of creating good jobs for their citizens. In fact, 25 states and the District of Columbia have passed such standards.

While Michigan is behind half the nation in establishing new standards, our State is in an excellent position to be a leader in renewable energy opportunities. Nation wide, Michigan is ranked 4th in its availability of resources, such as wind, water and solar, that can be put to use in generating affordable energy for Michigan residents. Recently the Blue-Green Alliance, which was formed through a strategic alliance of the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club, sated that Michigan stands to create over 34,700 new jobs by enacting a strong RPS legislation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Energy and Technology Committee, you have heard countless statistics both for and against this legislation. However, there is a human side to this issue that cannot be measured in numbers. It is the thousands of Michigan workers who have lost their jobs and hold little hope of finding employment that utilizes the skills they have developed over a lifetime of work in our auto plants, steel and paper mills and other industries. As a member of USW Local 2659, I have witnessed first hand the devastation of a plant closing and the suffering it brings to families.

We have an opportunity to get in on the ground level of an emerging industry that offers the opportunity to utilize the skills of Michigan's available workforce. At the same time, we will be offering residents of our State the promise of a future that is cleaner and healthier and an economy that is less vulnerable to shrinking oil supplies and unstable production levels. Again, the United Steelworkers Union urges the passage of a 20% Renewal Portfolio Standard by the year 2020.